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SUBJECT Impressions of Changes in Warsaw Since 1949/  
Sovietization/Consumer Goods and Prices/  
Intelligentsia/Jan Wilczek

NO. OF PAGES **5**

SUPP. TO  
REPORT NO.

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3. Outspoken Criticism of the Regime  
 "The atmosphere in Warsaw is characterized by a general dissatisfaction with everything. The second change lies in the outspoken, public criticism of the faults of the regime."

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Sovietization

4. "The people of Warsaw complain bitterly against the Sovietization which infiltrates by all possible channels. The symbol of this Sovietization is the Palace of Culture. One of the problems which is seriously discussed in Warsaw is what should be done with this building in the future. Warsaw is not large enough for such a colossal pile and it would perhaps be a pity to destroy it, as the Orthodox Church (SOBOR) in SASKI Square was destroyed. It is thought that maybe all governmental departments and offices could be lodged there. At any rate, Polish architects are already deliberating how to reconstruct the building so as to deprive it of its Soviet character.
5. "In architecture, the process of Sovietization is marked. It is now obvious to all that the regime wants to rebuild ancient Warsaw with utmost care. In this sphere the architects are left in absolute freedom. It can safely be said that the results are excellent. The Old Town, Cathedral, the 'POD BLACHA' Palace, the Polish Bank, St. Alexander's Church and other such buildings are beautifully rebuilt. On the other hand, the regime wants to destroy everything which arose between ancient Warsaw and the new, Communist Warsaw. All traces of 20 years of independence and of the bourgeois Warsaw of the beginning of the 20th century are therefore to disappear from the city. The new Warsaw is to be built on the Soviet pattern. The best example of this new Warsaw is the MDM district--grandiose, disproportionate, totalitarian. The purpose of the statues and sculptured ornaments on the buildings is to impose. The galleries along the houses make the broad street even broader. Other central districts of the city are also to be reconstructed on the same monumental lines. But architects already point to a serious construction fault in the MDM. From the sidewalk one ascends to the gallery by five steps. With the winter snowstorms and frozen sidewalks in Warsaw, and, of course, with the muddle in the Municipal services, the snow will certainly never be swept away and people will break their legs on the slippery steps.
6. "Warsaw is a city of state employees. There is no more 'private initiative,' save in the market place opposite the Polytechnic and a few small shops in back streets. But the whole population of Poland is now divided into three classes: peasants, workers and state employees. In Warsaw everybody is a state employee. Bureaucracy suffocates everything and everybody. Innumerable heaps of documents of all description are needed to settle the simplest human problem. A medical treatment is a sinister experience. It consists of interminable waiting in queues. There is a saying in Warsaw that in order to obtain medical treatment in People's Poland, one has to have an iron health. This bureaucracy is another sign of Sovietization.
7. "The main instruments of cultural Sovietization are the theatres, cinemas, and books. deterioration in the standards of the actors, decorators and producers. In Teatr Polski - once the representative stage of Warsaw--the acting and decor were on the level of amateur theatricals: only the actresses Cwiklinska and Romanowna were good. The play was a new piece by Morsztyn, called 'Polacy Nie Gesi', obviously written on the 'social order' ('Zamowienia Polecznego'). There is a flood of cheap Soviet literature. To prove that the Soviet authorities assign to Soviet books purely political functions, it is enough to say that Soviet soldiers and officials posted in Poland buy these books, especially the ones on scientific and technical subjects, and send them back to the USSR, where their families re-sell them at a great profit. This practice is well-known. Soviet books are sent to Poland at 'dumping prices' to serve the task of Sovietization.

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Communication

8. "Construction of the Warsaw subway meets with enormous difficulties. The capital is built partly on the former marshes and sandy shores of the Vistula. At a certain depth the soil is still marshy with many underground streams. [redacted] the

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earth deep down is still soft and to deal with these difficulties is beyond Poland's present technical resources. No results should therefore be expected before five years at the earliest. Work on the underground was considerably reduced in early summer 1953, and a large number of workers were directed to other building sites--some to the reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town and many to the Nowa Huta combine.

Consumer Goods and Prices

9. The people of Warsaw are better dressed than in 1949, but the quality of domestic materials is always low. The percentage of faults in production remains at a high level. There are many faulty goods on the market, especially clothing articles and footwear.
10. "In comparison with 1949, food prices have risen. [redacted] they averaged the following levels:

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Meat: 1 kg pork - 30 zlotys  
       " beef - from 20 zlotys  
       " veal - about 25 zlotys  
 1 kg wheat flour - 6 zlotys (this flour is of particularly bad quality. It does not rise. As a result all sorts of breads and pastries in Poland are still unsatisfactory--dumpy, sticky, heavy - in contrast to the standards of bakery products before World War II.)  
 A loaf of rye bread - 3 zlotys  
 1 kg of butter - 35-40 zlotys.  
 1 kg of coffee - 300 zlotys or more.  
 /Collector's Note: Contact here comments that the prices of other articles--clothing, underwear, etc--quoted by the source do not differ from previous information in summer 1953/.

11. "Parcels from abroad are invaluable. The most profitable gifts are still razor-blades, coffee--especially Nestle's coffee, all kinds of spices, cocoa, woolen materials and knitting wool.

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12. [redacted] some action of assistance should be organized in the West, especially for the non-Communist intelligentsia which suffers great poverty.

13. "A family living in Warsaw, in order to maintain a civil standard living, should earn at least 1200 zlotys in monthly salaries. But the salaries are not high, and even Communist dignitaries do not get more than about 2000 zlotys. [redacted] every resourceful person tries to hold two or three jobs at once and in this way to make the ends meet.

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14. "The women of Warsaw dress quite smartly. The great ladies of the regime get their frocks from the one and only remaining private dressmaking establishment [redacted] and from the Centre of Folk's Art (Centrala Przemyslu Ludowo Artystycznego), which maintains an elegant dressmaking workshop.

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15. "There is a great shortage on the market of many essential articles. From time to time they suddenly appear and then disappear again. Toilet paper is nicknamed 'bonds' (Papiery Wartosciowe) in Warsaw. It is so scarce and difficult to get that people are always on the lookout for it, and speculators buy large quantities for resale. There can be no question of any rationing system for this item. Therefore, if any shop receives an allocation, the first person entering the shop can practically buy out the whole stock. In the streets one sees from time to time people carrying chains of toilet-paper rolls threaded on a string. Other pedestrians look at them without amusement, only with an expression of envy.

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- [redacted] 50X1-HUM
- Cafes
16. "Warsaw cafes (eg. The Lajkonik) are always full. They are quite attractive places. But this habit of spending hours at a cafe table, so dear to Central and Eastern Europeans is gradually being eradicated by the Communists. For the present, however, the cafes are nice, overcrowded and not very expensive."
- Warsaw Intelligentsia
17. "The Polish writer Antoni Slonimski and his wife are flourishing. They have a beautiful flat, earn a lot of money--he by writing, she by painting. The only snag is that they cannot travel abroad" [redacted] 50X1-HUM
- [redacted] 50X1-HUM
18. "The poet Julian Tuwim is an absolute 'millionaire'."
19. "The woman writer Nalkowska, old, with a lot of war-paint on her sagging face [redacted] came to an understanding with the regime and fares quite well." 50X1-HUM
20. "The Communist writer Jan Kott, after being demoted for a while to the post of professor of Polish literature at Wroclaw University, is to return to Warsaw in autumn 1953. But nobody knows his new post."
21. "Apart from a few old names, the leaders in the press, radio, and literature of today's Poland are all brand new teams. Older, non-Communist writers and journalists suffer poverty and hope for some help from abroad which, unfortunately, never appears. The intellectual classes of Poland live in most precarious conditions. Such 'luxuries' as owning a private car are not in the picture any more. No one [redacted] in Warsaw, even from Communist circles, possessed a car of his own." 50X1-HUM
- Jan Wilczek
22. "Under the Communist regime personal careers have nothing to do with real qualifications. It is the Party, and not the talents, that 'makes a man'. As an example, consider the nomination of Jan Wilczek from Krakow as Vice-Minister of Culture. The man's intellectual abilities are nil." [redacted] 50X1-HUM
- [redacted]
- [redacted] After the war he suddenly became an enthusiastic communist. But even his comrades from the Party do not understand how anyone could nominate such a stupid and worthless man a Vice-Minister of Culture.
- Current Warsaw Jokes
23. [redacted] 50X1-HUM
- (a) The Bank Square (Plac Bankowy) in Warsaw has been re-named 'Dzherzynski Square'. A woman travelling by tramway asks the conductor:  
'Is it the Bank Square already?'  
'No, he replies, it's still Dzierzynski's.'
- (b) 'Anything new?' one Warsaw man asks another.  
'I do not know, the jamming was too strong.'

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- (c) The prominent Communist woman of Spain, Dolores Ibarruri - 'La Passionaria' - came to Warsaw for a visit. They brought her to a mass meeting in a workers' hall where she talked for two hours in Spanish amidst the bursts of enthusiastic and overwhelming applause.

'What were you all so happy about?' one worker was asked by a friend. 'Why did you acclaim her so much? You could not understand a word of what she was saying.'

'Ah, answered the worker. 'But every few minutes she shouted as loudly as she could: Democrazia Granda.'

(Note: The word granda, in Warsaw slang, means 'swindle'.)"

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